

Arts & Entertainment

Artist sheds restraints; paints emotion

By Peter Schmitz

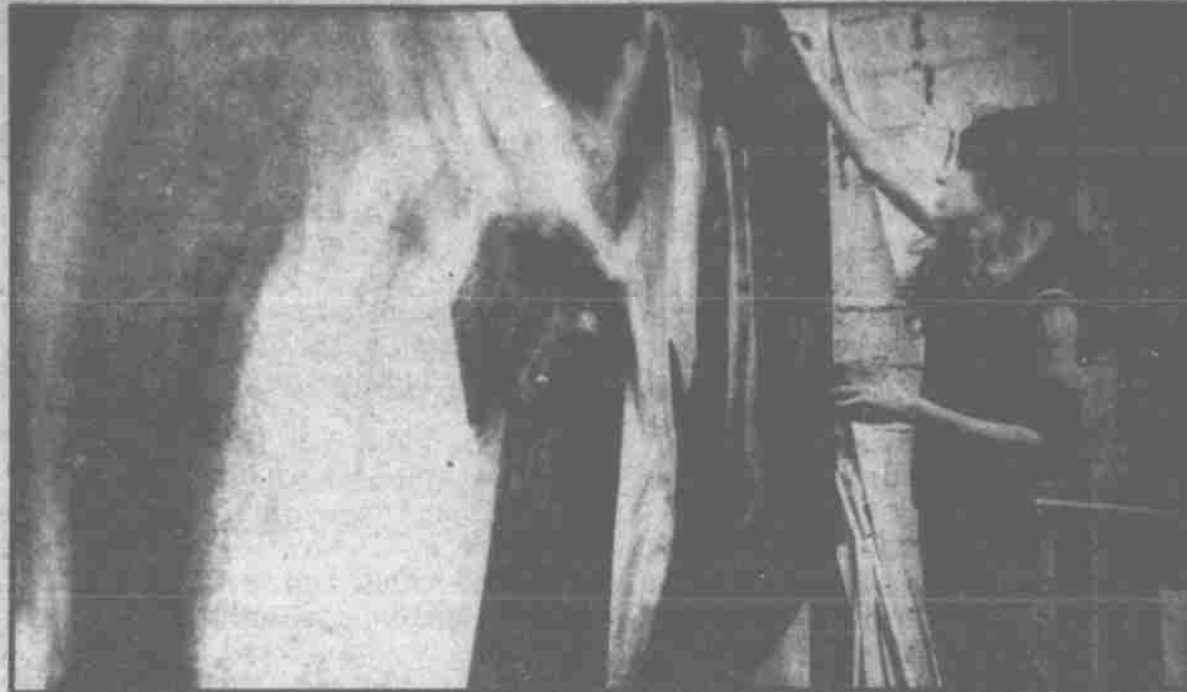
"Shock and dismay" are not normally the emotions an artist hopes to generate with his or her work, but that is how Rebecca Ross describes response to her work from people within and outside the art profession.

Her art also has generated favorable reaction. Since 1979, when she entered UNL to study art, she has been awarded two scholarships. For the 1982-83 academic year she was one of four undergraduates to receive the Vreeland Award. This year she became the first recipient of the Shelly Arnold Waggoner Memorial Scholarship, an award which also is given to promising undergraduates who are art majors.

Paintings and drawings by Ross have made the rounds in numerous exhibitions. Several of her works have been shown in conjunction with the Art League (a group organized by students within the UNL art department) at the Nebraska and East unions. Last spring she participated in an exhibition for Women's Week at UNL. Her work also has been on display at the Village Art Gallery. **Sunday school artist**

While attending Sunday school, a young Rebecca Ross was certain of what she wanted to be when she grew up after winning first prize for a tempera painting. Because she thought that the piece was undone (there was an ample amount of space which she did not have time to fill in), the prize came as a surprise to her. Yet it was important for two reasons she said: Someone recognized her talent, and more importantly, she was taught to value her work, however unconventional or unfinished it might appear.

At 21, Ross has created a substantial



Staff photo by Dave Bentz

Rebecca Ross, working on her latest "clothes-line" artwork.

body of work which bears her unique imprint in style and subject matter. Like any visionary painter, writer or filmmaker, she will re-work her themes and subject matters innumerable. Her portfolio is thus replete with paintings and drawings of fetuses, clotheslines, ironing boards and skylines.

Depending upon her theme and how long she has approached it, the style of Ross' work can be romantic, abstract or expressionistic. But whatever movement or combination of movements a single work may recall, one can usually count on her to paint on a large canvas in broad and frequent strokes.

Aware of rules

The sources of Ross' imagination stem from complex theoretical, emotional and political concerns. Until she

studied at the university, art was a "free and easy" pursuit. Higher education however, had made her aware of rules of design, composition and manipulation of materials, she said. Initially this restrained her, but later, the grammar of art gave her the ability and freedom to express matters of importance to her.

Many of these concerns aware out of spontaneous flow of emotion, she said.

"I may be walking around and I will see something and it will really move me and I don't forget about it," Ross said. "So that is definitely one source, particularly with clothing."

"With the paintings of fetuses, I was just going through a time where I was aware of violent transition and I was longing for the security of the womb. And I ended up making these series of fetuses progressing through violent transition."

Feminism is also an important

foundation for her art, she said. This philosophy supports her notion that subject matters such as clotheslines and ironing boards, objects known mainly by women, are "acceptable themes for high art."

Feminism in perspective

Ross is not hesitant to clarify the importance of placing feminism within a proper perspective in relation to her work. She says that "it's easy to be tempted to use feminism as a crutch as far as finding subject matter, as far as finding a reason to do something... I want to show more respect for it than to jump on a bandwagon."

Most of Ross' paintings and drawings are characterized by what our culture would deem "feminine concerns." But her style gives her work a transcendent quality that goes beyond gender distinction. And because of her unique way of representing an object, viewers cannot help but abandon socially-conditioned responses to seemingly unimportant things as laundry. Her work with the fetuses has done much to reveal the frightening beginnings of the human experience which encompass unknown mysteries which may be found somewhere between the clothesline and the skyline.

After graduation, Ross plans to attend graduate school outside of Nebraska. Upon completion of her studies she hopes to teach at a college or to become affiliated with an art gallery.

On Sept. 25, Ross and 19 other artists will be presenting and marketing their work (which includes glass, ceramics, paintings, photographs, prints and sculpture) in an exhibition titled "Emerging Artists" to be at 3710 Folsom, between 1 p.m. and 7:30 p.m.

R.E.M.'s 'Murmur' full of 'thoughtful music'

R.E.M.
Murmur
IRS Records

I.R.S. Records may have hit the cash on the register when it gave the go ahead to another Athens, Ga., fun club, R.E.M.

The band has proved its worth lately with the entrance of its debut LP, *Murmur*, into the Top 30. But should one be so quick to call R.E.M. another of I.R.S.'s "dance bands?"

One open-minded listen to *Murmur* gives an idea of what R.E.M. is trying to say — and it has nothing to do with rapid eye movement.

Careful evaluation of R.E.M.'s music reveals inspiration from the best of American rock 'n' roll. If one characteristic of R.E.M. can be given as a guide to their overall sound, it would have to be the blending of guitars with a lead vocal that pushes every song along to success.

The band breaks down to a group of four individuals who seem to be serious about what they're doing. This is no high school band, Brad and Muffy.

Lead guitarist Pete Buck provides most of the fun with a sound that offers direction as well as fine-tuned intricacy. Ditto for bass whiz Mike Mills.

Bill Berry offers some fine percussion effects, and many times is up against the rhythm of lead vocalist Michael Stipe. Stipe's vocals never overshadow the instrumentation, largely due to steady production. Technical consideration aside, the band has done well, to say the least, for a first-album effort.

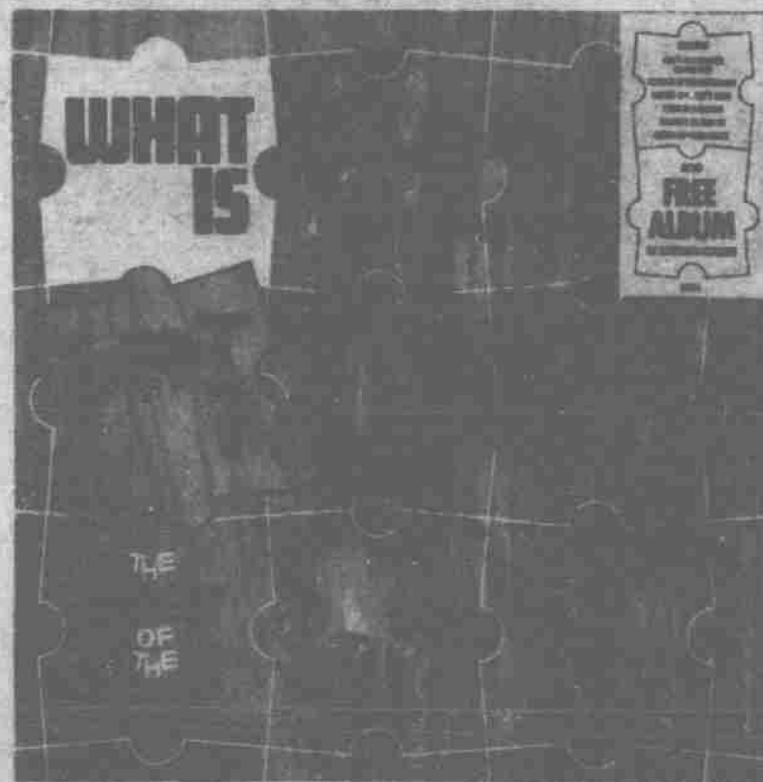
The debut single "Radio Free Europe" stands above many of the songs with its steady guitar mix and easily understood beat.

With release of the cut as a single, R.E.M. exhibits one of the best exercises of Stipe's vocal abilities. Bordering raspy, Stipe shows a command of the lyrics that allows no questions.

The same vocals show a bit of boredom on the pair of slower songs, but not to worry, for Stipe can put gusto into a ballad, too.

All this talk of musical variation shouldn't imply R.E.M. has no consistency. Every song on *Murmur* exhibits a talent that not every band has: the ability to make a pleasing blend of talented musicians with vocals that convey a feeling directly from the writer.

Any listener interested in an album displaying "thoughtful rock" can look to *Murmur* for an exam-



ple of true musical craftsmanship.

None of these guys are related to Buddy Holly, and the band doesn't profess to be the next musical phenomenon. But give credit to four guys who can smile because of pride, and not because they can play a guitar and run across stage at the same time.

— Todd E. Kystad

Best of the English Beat is excellent compilation

The Beat
What is Beat?
Arista — Go Feet (UK)

Two members of the English Beat, Dave Wakeling and Ranking Roger departed this summer, leaving the Beat with no lead vocalists. There isn't a better time to come out with an album compiled of songs from the Beat's three previous albums.

What is Beat? contains material from their three and a half years together. The 14 songs on this album are basically the best of the Beat. And the best is excellent.

Songs range from the group's first big hit with the remake of "Tears of a Clown" to songs off of last year's *Special Beat Service* LP.

"Mirror in the Bathroom" has a uniquely Beat sound, with lots of saxophone.

"Ackee 1-2-3" has a thoroughly Jamaican feel — it even has children as background vocalists.

"Rankin' Full Stop" is probably the reason why the Beat named their label *Go Feet*. This cut really does move feet.

There are the fun reggae songs like "Stand Down Margaret" and "Hands Off... She's Mine" or the more serious sounding songs such as "Can't Get Used To Losing You," but all of the cuts have a certain bounce and an underlying excitement that the Beat were doing what they wanted to do.

This isn't just another ska dance album either. This is the ska dance album and is perfect for those who have heard little or nothing of the group and for those who want to complete their Beat collection.

No, they're not breaking up. In fact, almost right after Wakeling and Roger left, the rest of the band started looking for replacements. Wakeling and Roger have formed a new group called General Public.

The British version of the album already is in some record stores. It includes a free album of extended mixes of some of the songs on the album plus "March of the Swivel Heads" and "Psychedelic Rockers." The import version has a higher price tag than the domestic album, which should be out any day. However, it is worth the extra money to get this version of the record.

As the cover proclaims: "What is Beat?... This is Beat!"

— Stephanie Zink